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Growing up in the 1980s, the Britain of smoking, strikes and poll tax riots wasn't a wholly inspirational place. But at the end of the decade, as the country shifted gear from the slow decline of industry into being a nation of services, Canary Wharf emerged from the rubble of London's docks to forge a new global capital of commerce. Cash became king.

In the interwar years, housing in England was part of a unified department covering health. As Britain – like much of Europe – creeps towards an era of older, wiser, but ultimately more costly citizens for healthcare, well-being needs to be taken seriously. By 2030, one in five people will be over the current retirement age. That requires us to unite urban planning with housing, delivery and local politics in much the same way.

Let's be honest though, the elderly are just as much of a problem for planning. Older people are far more likely to attend planning committees and oppose development and the polarisation between those with housing equity and those without has widened. This social and financial unease fuels discontent, yet despite dozens of promises and housing ministers, the localism of the Blair and Cameron years is still the order of the day. A better balance must be struck in listening to local voices that aren't so loud and taking decisions in our best strategic interests, rather than simply buying to those with the time – and financial resources – to oppose development.

In fairness though, who can blame them? As was noted in recent research from Grosvenor, it's the view of a firm majority that there is rarely any short-term upside from development for locals. Property already starts with a terrible reputation in many quarters – worsened in recent years by a simultaneous surge in homelessness and profits, along with front page coverage of rumbling leasehold and new build quality scandals. It's a huge risk to companies, yet many still fail to recognise or take it seriously. Many pay lip service to consultation; slapping around phrases like "placemaking" without any real notion of what it entails, content to pass off a noodle stand charging people £9 for chow mein as "a street food hub" to engage the community.

Many firms such as those contributing to this report, do not do this. They think over the long term and see the big picture. Policy must do the same. The short-term political cycle (no more than five years, but often shorter given current volatility) is wholly at odds with the nature of regeneration. While it's true that certain cabinet members are on par with Doctor

Who in their ability to resurface despite seeming and often repeated episodes of career suicide, the horizon of politics barely extends past the end of the BBC's next sci-fi series. This has to change, by extending the timescales for consideration in-line with the realities of regeneration. There needs to be a shift towards a more diverse array of actors beyond the big players in development. For SME developers, all but wiped out since the 1990s, the stresses and delays of development can often cripple. Better supporting of small firms through provision for Homes England must be a priority.

As Britain's knowledge economy continues to burgeon, with sectors like space, medical technology, IT and AI emerging at different rates, they will require a similar diversity of talent to flourish. By not giving them the freedom to grow unabated, we are cutting our noses off to spite our faces. There has to be an open system of visas for graduates wishing to work, and for high-value firms best placed to generate wealth for our country. We all see the positives from having borders open to knowledge, skills and opportunity.

I know from my own experience of helping to launch and exit prominent tech start-ups that finding talent is tough. When I founded Blackstock, my vision was to lead an independent advisory business offering strategic consultancy, content creation and analysis alongside straight-forward comms advice that didn't separate print, digital or broadcast media from public affairs and financial PR. We work with property and tech companies to help them tell the best version of their story – whether it's to investors, local politicians or indeed the press. The property industry needs to get better at this. It has a great story to tell and doesn't need to be confined to a past of black and white TV.

We want to engage debate around what changes could really foster new investment and innovation across key regions in Britain, focussing on all that the Arc and its many surrounding areas represents and ensuring its place as a global brand. But to capitalise on the growing torrent of institutional investment into the market, it is vital that the right infrastructure is prioritised and political games aren't played with funding that portrays a false choice between short term needs and long term investments. A tremendously bright future awaits us, irrespective of what Brexit brings. We need to develop in spite of politics and get vocal about how radically things need changing.



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